

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ತುಣುಕುಗಳು  
PAPER CLIPPINGS

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: 19 Prime Minister

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: Times of India

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 15/4/2020

## Plastic shields, MPs seated in galleries Parl's new normal

Akhilesh.Singh@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Despite the elaborate rehearsals, it was still a surreal scene on the first day of the monsoon session of Parliament, with mask-wearing MPs seated behind plastic shields, and several seated in the visitors' galleries to ensure social distancing. Both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha functioned in a relative calm that enhanced a sense of altered re-

► 25 MPs, many Parl staff test positive for Covid-19, page 5

alities in the time of Covid-19.

The dispersal of MPs over both the chambers was succinctly summed up by Rajya Sabha chairman Venkaiah Naidu who noted that people who were never elected to Lok Sabha were sitting in the chamber and the same was true of several MPs from the lower House who found themselves in the House of Elders. Given that MPs were sitting



“Our brave soldiers...are defending the borders with great courage and high spirits, in difficult terrain...I believe Parliament will send out a unanimous message that the entire country stands in support of our soldiers”

~PM Narendra Modi

in the visitors' galleries too, Naidu asked them to raise a hand to be spotted when called on to speak even as Speaker Om Birla noted the high attendance despite the pandemic.

While some seniors opted out, veterans like Mulayam Singh Yadav and Farooq Abdullah turned up, though the ageing Samajwadi patriarch needed help to get around. An-

other veteran, JMM leader Shibu Soren, took oath as Rajya Sabha MP, with Naidu encouraging the Dishom Guru to speak loudly as a mask muffled his voice. Given the task of organising complex seating, Naidu and Birla seemed pleased that the proceedings got underway with minimum fuss and disruption.

► Speaking while sitting, P 5

## On first day, presiding officers use Covid rule of speaking while sitting

► Continued from page 1

The decorum may be tested as contentious issues and bills are taken up, but the first day saw presiding officers use the Covid 19 rule of speaking while sitting, rather than rising, to good effect to keep MPs and leaders nailed to their places. Naidu could be heard telling Congress's Jairam Ramesh not to move around the House and this might well curb the usual on-the-floor discussions that take place.

Despite the Centre's adviso-

ry to parties that MPs above 35 years could avoid attending, most reached in time with the Lok Sabha attendance standing at 359, even higher than on some normal days. The seating arrangements saw Prime Minister Narendra Modi alone in the two-seat bench to the right of the Speaker and deputy leader of the House Rajnath Singh, who usually shares the bench, moving to the next chair. Textiles minister Smriti Irani, who has a seat in the front row, was one row back. The front seats of opposition benches were occu-

pled by DMK's T R B.alu and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury of Congress. “Chambers of the two Houses and the galleries, where members are seated, will be considered as part of Lok Sabha when the House proceedings are on,” Birla said.

Opposition members protested suspension of question hour but left it at that. Some members like Trinamool Congress leader Kalyan Banerjee wore face shields in addition to masks. There were a few covering their faces with “gamchhas” (scarves) too.